

**Bureau of Land Management
Winnemucca Field Office
Categorical Exclusion Review**

CX # NV-020-07-CX- 33	Date: 3/7/07
Applicant: Mike Stremmer	Prepared By: Angie Messmer
Title of Proposed Action: Jersey Valley Prescribed Grazing Fuels Project	File Code: (43 CFR) 9214
Location of Proposed Action: (T/R, ¼¼): T.25-27N, R. 39-40E	Lease/Case File/Serial # 2823 JB08

Introduction

Purpose/Need: In 2006 this portion of the district experienced numerous lightning strikes early in the season (May-June), resulting in several fires. Hazardous fine flashy fuels (cheatgrass) still exists across much of the valley portions of the allotment placing rangeland and wildlife habitat at risk. Most of the valley portions of the allotment are extensive monocultures of cheatgrass with few native grasses remaining and some native shrubs such as greasewood and shadscale scattered sporadically through the cheatgrass. The proposed project would help to break up the fuel continuity within portions of the allotment in strategic areas; so in the event of a wildfire the fire might be slowed, stopped, or its size decreased before it burns extensive portions of the allotment. There are also several rural and historical residences within the general proposed project area; implementing the proposed project would give the added benefit of additional protection to these residences. The purpose of this project is to reduce hazardous fuels and provide fuelbreaks to protect rangeland within the Jersey Valley Allotment.

The second purpose of this project is to study the effects of prescribed grazing on cheatgrass in a controlled environment. The project locations would be monitored by clipping and weighing the cheatgrass, there would also be photo points to help see change over time. Specific monitoring locations would be set up by the BLM and the proponent. The cheatgrass would be clipped and weighed before and after treatment to determine the initial pounds per acre of cheatgrass and the reduction (after grazing) in pounds per acre of cheatgrass. Future treatments would use this data as a guide to adjust cattle numbers, treatment areas, treatment times, and other related issues.

Proposed Action

The proponent is proposing to create fuelbreaks within condition class 3 areas in the Jersey Valley Allotment using prescribed grazing. Prescribed grazing would entail the strict management of cattle through the use of temporary electric fence and specific herding practices to keep the cattle within the treatment area. The cattle would be managed to achieve specific measurable objectives (ie: reduction of cheatgrass fuel loading to 200 lbs/ac). Progress during and after treatment would be monitored to determine if changes need to be made as treatments progress. Timing of the proposed project is critical to the success of the project. Grazing of proposed fuelbreak locations would occur between March 15th and June 15th. Cheatgrass generally begins growing between February and April depending on the year. In order to reduce fuel loads, cheatgrass would be grazed while it is green and most palatable to cattle. The following fuelbreaks would be grazed to meet the objective (200 lbs/ac or less of cheatgrass) on each fuelbreak. Cattle would be removed from fuelbreak areas once the objective is met or by June 15th whichever comes first.

The first fuelbreak area is located near the bottom of Favret Canyon and extends down to the private lands and McCoy Spring where the cattle would water (see Jersey Valley Proposed Fuelbreak Locations Map #1 Fuelbreak). There is no WSA within this proposed project location. The existing vegetation is cheatgrass with few native perennial species. At this proposed project site temporary electric fence would be installed to keep the cattle within a 100 yard (300 foot) corridor on the south side of the existing road. Approximately 400-600 cattle would graze this area starting around or on March 15th. The cattle would be used to graze the cheatgrass until there is a good fuelbreak (very little fine flashy fuels, low fuel loading, low fuel continuity, less than 200 lbs/ac of cheatgrass) in place. The proposed area would be fenced with a temporary electric fence to hold the cattle on the proposed project area. The approximate acreage to be

grazed is 72 acres.

There would be at least 2-3 monitoring locations established by the BLM and proponent. These sites would be marked with a GPS and established as a key monitoring site for this project. Before and after photos would be taken for the duration of the project. Clip and weigh plots would be established at this same area. Clipping and weighing would take place before grazing occurs and immediately after cattle have moved out of the treatment area for the duration of the project. Monitoring would be done with the BLM initially to set up the sites and gather baseline data. The proponent would continue the monitoring under a cooperative monitoring agreement with the BLM. The data would be shared between the proponent and the BLM. The proponent would also record and share cattle data with the BLM, such as cattle numbers on the treatment area, supplement information, and any other problems and observations associated with the project.

This fuelbreak would be seeded as a trial with a mixture of Forage Kochia and Crested Wheatgrass. The seed would be applied by the proponent while the cattle are grazing the area. The hoof action of the cattle would mix the seeds into the soil. Results of the seeding would be monitored.

The second fuelbreak area is located between McCoy Spring and the county road south of the Gooseberry fire rehab fence (see Jersey Valley Proposed Fuelbreak Locations Map #2 Fuelbreak). The existing vegetation is cheatgrass with few to no native perennial species. There is an existing boundary fence that runs between these two areas, a temporary electric fence would be installed 200 yards (600 feet) out from the existing fence between the county road and McCoy spring so the cattle are concentrated within this area. Approximately 400-600 cattle would graze this area after they have grazed Fuelbreak #1 (Farvet Canyon), sometime between March and April. The cattle would be used to graze the cheatgrass until there is a good fuelbreak (very little fine flashy fuels, low fuel loading, low fuel continuity, less than 200 lbs/ac of cheatgrass) in place. The approximate acreage to be grazed is 300 acres.

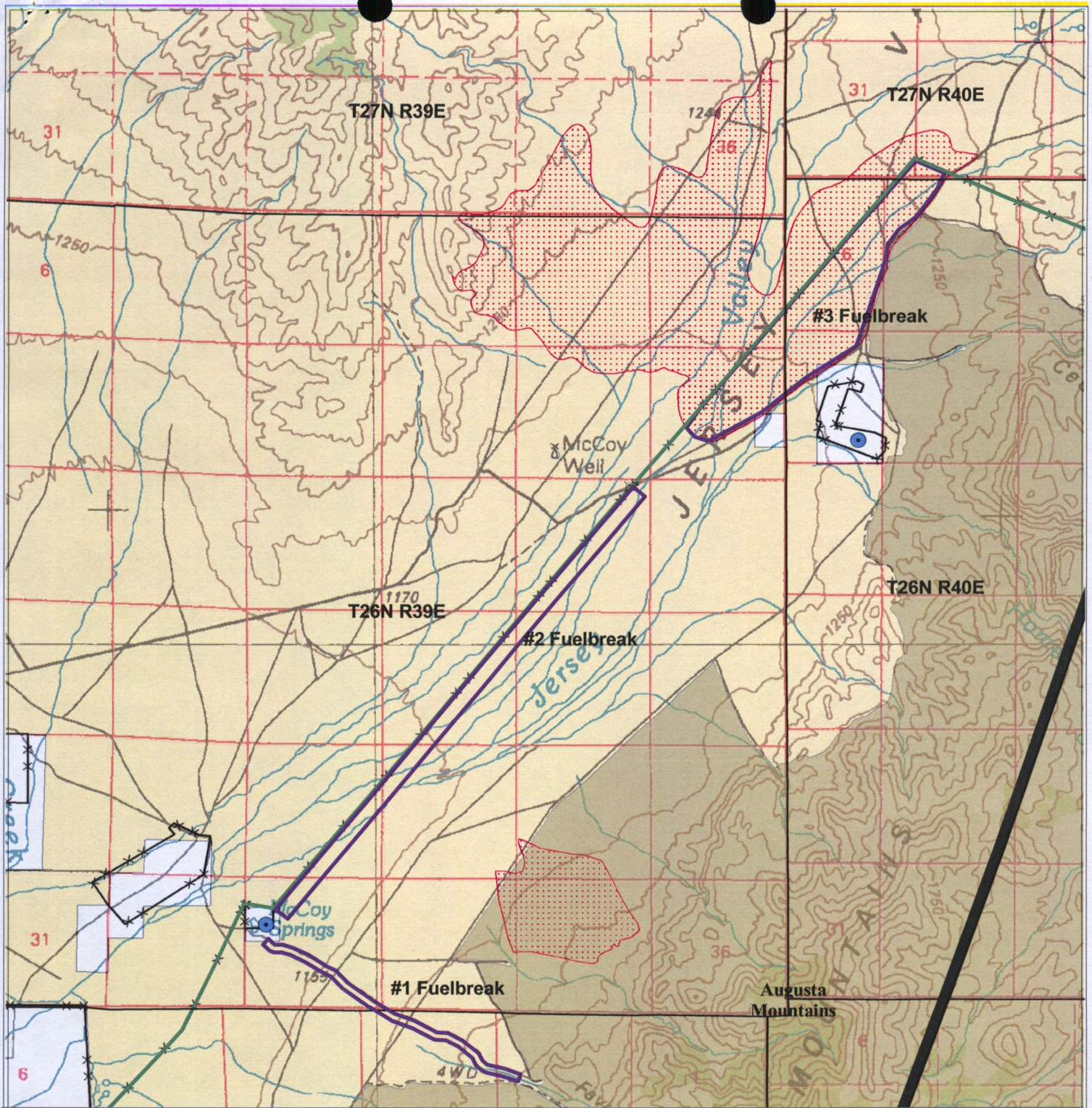
There would be at least 2-3 monitoring locations established by the BLM and proponent. These sites would be marked with a GPS and established as a key monitoring site for this project. Before and after photos would be taken for the duration of the project. Clip and weigh plots would be established at this same area. Clipping and weighing would take place before grazing occurs and immediately after cattle have moved out of the treatment area for the duration of the project. Monitoring would be done with the BLM initially to set up the sites and gather baseline data. The proponent would continue the monitoring under a cooperative monitoring agreement with the BLM. The data would be shared between the proponent and the BLM. The proponent would also record and share cattle data with the BLM, such as cattle numbers on the treatment area, supplement information, and any other problems and observations associated with the project.

The third fuelbreak area is within the Gooseberry fire rehab fence in the Jersey Valley Allotment (see Jersey Valley Proposed Fuelbreak Locations Map #3 Fuelbreak). The proponent would haul water from Home Station Gap Homestead to portable troughs on the private lands next to the treatment area. The fire rehab in this area was unsuccessful and is currently a large field of cheatgrass. Approximately 400-600 cattle would graze this area sometime between May and June. The cattle would be used to graze the cheatgrass until there is a good fuelbreak (very little fine flashy fuels, low fuel loading, low fuel continuity, less than 200 lbs/ac of cheatgrass) in place. The approximate acreage to be grazed is 630 acres.

There would be at least 2 monitoring locations established by the BLM and proponent. These sites would be marked with a GPS and established as a key monitoring site for this project. Before and after photos would be taken for the duration of the project. Clip and weigh plots would be established at this same area. Clipping and weighing would take place before grazing occurs and immediately after cattle have moved out of the treatment area for the duration of the project. Monitoring would be done with the BLM initially to set up the sites and gather baseline data. The proponent would continue the monitoring under a cooperative monitoring agreement with the BLM. The data would be shared between the proponent and the BLM. The proponent would also record and share cattle data with the BLM, such as cattle numbers on the treatment area, supplement information, and any other problems and observations associated with the project.

These fuelbreaks would provide protection of rangeland, wildlife habitat and the western edge of the Augusta Mounaints WSA, as well as the rural and historical homesteads that exist near the fuel break areas. After completion of the prescribed grazing treatments the proponent would remove his cattle.

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Jersey Valley Proposed Fuelbreak Locations

- Winnemucca District Boundary
- Grazing Allotments
- AUGUSTA MOUNTAINS WSA
- Past Fire History
- Trough Locations
- Fuelbreak Locations



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No warranty is made by the Bureau of Land Management as to the accuracy, reliability, or completeness of these data for individual use or aggregate use with other data.

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Miles

February 28, 2007
1:63,269

APPENDIX 2
516 DM 2
Categorical Exclusions: Extraordinary Circumstances

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- | <u>Yes</u> | <u>No</u> | | |
|------------|-----------|------|--|
| [] | [x] | | |
| [] | [x] | 2.1 | Have significant impacts on public health or safety |
| [] | [x] | 2.2 | Have significant impacts on such natural resources and unique geographic characteristics as historic or cultural resources; park, recreation or refuge lands; wilderness areas; wild or scenic rivers; national natural landmarks; sole or principal drinking water aquifers; prime farmlands; wetlands (Executive Order 11990); floodplains (Executive Order 11988); national monuments; migratory birds; and other ecologically significant or critical areas. |
| [] | [x] | 2.3 | Have highly controversial environmental effects or involve unresolved conflicts concerning alternative uses of available resources [NEPA Section 102(2)(E)]. |
| [] | [x] | 2.4 | Have highly uncertain and potentially significant environmental effects or involve unique or unknown environmental risks. |
| [] | [x] | 2.5 | Establish a precedent for future action or represent a decision in principle about future actions with potentially significant environmental effects. |
| [] | [x] | 2.6 | Have a direct relationship to other actions with individually insignificant but cumulatively significant environmental effects. |
| [] | [x] | 2.7 | Have significant impacts on properties listed, or eligible for listing, on the National Register of Historic Places as determined by either the bureau or office. |
| [] | [x] | 2.8 | Have significant impacts on species listed, or proposed to be listed, on the List of Endangered or Threatened Species, or have significant impacts on designated Critical Habitat for these species. |
| [] | [x] | 2.9 | Violate a Federal law, or a State, local, or tribal law or requirement imposed for the protection of the environment. |
| [] | [x] | 2.10 | Have a disproportionately high and adverse effect on low income or minority populations (Executive Order 12898). |
| [] | [x] | 2.11 | Limit access to and ceremonial use of Indian sacred sites on Federal lands by Indian religious practitioners or significantly adversely affect the physical integrity of such sacred sites (Executive Order 13007). |
| [] | [x] | 2.12 | Contribute to the introduction, continued existence, or spread of noxious weeds or non-native invasive species known to occur in the area or actions that may promote the introduction, growth, or expansion of the range of such species (Federal Noxious Weed Control Act and Executive Order 13112). |

All of the above questions must be answered negatively before the Categorical Exclusion may be approved. This checklist is taken from 516 DM2, Appendix 2.

Prepared By: Angela Messmer Date 3/7/07

Bureau of Land Management
Winnemucca Field Office

Categorical Exclusion
Team Review

Applicant: Mike Stremmer
CX#: NV-020-07-CX- 33
Lease/Cs File/Serial No. 2823 JB08

Prepared By Angie Messmer

Date: March 6, 2007

Reviewer	Title	Date
<u>Scott Clarke</u>	(Range Specialist)	<u>3/6/07</u>
<u>Regis C. Smith</u>	(Cultural Resources)	<u>3/6/7</u>
<u>Cameron McElroy</u>	(Wildlife/T&E)	<u>3/6/07</u>
<u>Donna Eckel</u>	(Wild Horses and Burros)	<u>3/7/07</u>
<u>Angela Messmer</u>	(Fire Ecologist)	<u>3/6/07</u>

Minerals and W&T were represented on original IDT but have since documented that there are no concerns for those areas and no need to be on the IDT.
J B Rice

Part I: Plan Conformance Review

The proposed Action is consistent with the:

- ☐ Paradise-Denio Management Framework Plan
☒ Sonoma-Gerlach Management Framework Plan

Part II: Compliance with the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA)

The proposed action is categorically excluded from further documentation under NEPA in accordance with the following:

☒ 516 DM2, (DOI) Appendix 1, 1.6 Non-Destructive data collection, inventory (including field, aerial and satellite surveying and mapping), study, research and monitoring activities.

☒ 516 DM2, (DOI) Appendix 1, 1.12 Hazardous fuels reduction activities using prescribed fire not to exceed 4,500 acres, and mechanical methods for crushing, piling, thinning, pruning, cutting, chipping, mulching, and mowing not to exceed 1000 acres. Such activities: Shall be limited to areas (1) in wildland urban interface and (2) Condition Classes 2 or 3 in Fire Regime Groups I, II, or III, outside of the wildland urban interface; Shall be identified through a collaborative framework as described in "A Collaborative Approach for Reducing Wildland Fire Risks to Communities and the Environment 10-Year Comprehensive Strategy Implementation Plan;" Shall be conducted consistent with agency and Departmental procedures and applicable land and resource management plans; Shall not be conducted in wilderness areas or impair the suitability of wilderness study areas for preservation as wilderness; Shall not include the use of herbicides or pesticides or the construction of new permanent roads or other new permanent infrastructures; and may include the sale of vegetative material if the primary purpose of the activity is hazardous fuels reduction.

☒ 516 DM6, (DOI) Appendix 5, 5.4 (D2) Placement and use of temporary (not to exceed one month) portable corrals and water troughs, providing no new road construction is needed.

The application of this categorical exclusion is appropriate because there are not extraordinary circumstances potentially having effects which may significantly affect the environment.

The Proposed Action has been reviewed to determine if any exceptions described in 516DM2, Appendix 2 apply (See attached page)

Reviewer (Environmental Coordinator)

L. B. Ricci 3/8/07
 (Signature) (Date)

Remarks:

Part III: Persons and agencies consulted: A proposal notification was sent out to interested publics including adjacent land owners, county and state agencies.

Part IV: FULL FORCE AND EFFECT DECISION: I have reviewed the proposed action for compliance with NEPA and compliance with the Sonoma-Gerlach Management Framework Plan (MFP) and have determined that the proposed project is in conformance with the MFP and that no other NEPA environmental analysis is required. It is my decision to implement the project, as described in the proposed fuel break plan subject to the following stipulations:

Stipulations.

Livestock outside of the identified fuel break areas are unauthorized.

Grazing within the fuel breaks is approved from March 15th to June 15th 2007.

Described infrastructure fencing would be installed prior to initiating grazing within the fuel break areas. Herding of livestock would be adhered to as described in the fuel break plan.

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Jersey Valley Prescribed
Grazing Fuels Project

All temporary fences shall be removed not later than July 1, 2007.

Hazardous fuel reduction actions shall not be conducted within the Augusta Mountain WSA.

Data gathered from monitoring would be used to determine if the project met the specified goals and objectives. Proponent and BLM will meet to discuss the results of monitoring.

Authorized Official

(Signature)

Date:

3/12/07